

NEWS BREAK

Article: **Indigenous relics sold in British Columbia coming home after 120 years in New York**

Section: **MAIN, A1**

This week's News Break selects an article from **Monday, April 1, 2025**, of The Seattle Times print replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions.

You are encouraged to modify this lesson to fit the needs of your students. For example, some teachers might use this as a take-home assignment and others might read and answer the questions in a small group or larger, class discussion.

****Please be sure to preview all NIE content before using it in your classroom to ensure it is appropriate for your students.***

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1

- Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2

- Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Objectives:

Students will explore salvage anthropology and the ethical implications of this practice. They will learn about the cultural and spiritual objects, including human remains that are being stored in museums throughout the country. They will learn about repatriation and how it helps Indigenous communities heal.

Pre-Reading Discussion:



- What do you think the article will be about, using this picture?
- Are there any clues? What can you infer?

Vocabulary Building:

Read this sentence, what do you think the highlighted words mean using *context clues*? A **context clue** is a word or words that are hints and refers to the sources of information outside of words that readers may use to predict the identities and meanings of unknown words.

Even at the time, the **acquisition** was contested.

Acquisition Guess:

Acquisition Definition:

Comprehension Questions:

1. In the early 1900s, Franz Boas, considered one of the founders of _____, became fascinated by a large shrine associated with Indigenous whaling rituals off the coast of British Columbia.
2. He had been sent a photograph of the shrine, which belonged to members of an Indigenous group called the _____.
3. What is “salvage anthropology?”
4. According to letters between him and Boas that were published in “The Yuquot Whalers’ Shrine,” Aldona Jonaitis’ 1999 book on the subject, a chief agreed to sell it for \$_____, only to return the money the next day after objections from the community.
5. In 1905, the same year that the full collection arrived in New York, Boas left the museum. The museum ultimately decided not to exhibit the large shrine in its entirety. For the next 120 years, it sometimes displayed or lent some of the carvings, and it created a small model that was on view from

- the early 1940s to about 2019. Mostly, the shrine was kept in _____ . Its loss was keenly felt by the place it came from, now the Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation.
6. On Thursday, a truck containing the many pieces that make up the shrine began its long journey to Vancouver Island in one of the most significant _____ in the museum's history.
 7. The story of the shrine's return can be attributed in large part to what?
 8. He cited a "growing urgency" for museums to change what?
 9. When it comes to Native human remains, funerary objects and other cultural items recovered in the United States, a law passed in 1990 set up what?
 10. Of the human remains that the museum still holds, more than half of the _____ individuals represented are from outside the U.S.
 11. Last year, talks to repatriate the shrine — known to some as the Whalers' Shrine and to others as the _____ because of its association with purification rituals — took on new urgency. They had been going on for decades.
 12. He referred to the shrine by a traditional name: _____.
 13. The transport and the delegation's trip is being paid for by the _____ , which recognized the shrine as a national historic site in the 1980s.
 14. Unwilling to put their ancestors' remains on a cross-country drive, the 16 skulls were securely placed in what?

Class Discussion Questions:

- What surprised (or stood out to) you in the article?
- At first, I thought _____, but now I think _____?

Do you think it's ethically right for museums to hold human remains of indigenous people? Why or why not?

Deeper-Dive comprehension questions for small groups, entire classes or journal entries and/ or essay prompts for extended enrichment assignments:

- What was "salvage anthropology," and how did Franz Boas's beliefs influence the acquisition of the Mowachaht Whalers' Shrine? Discuss the ethical implications of this practice.
- How did the changing attitudes towards Indigenous cultural objects and human remains within the American Museum of Natural History contribute to the eventual repatriation of the shrine?
- Discuss the role of "ownership" in the context of cultural artifacts. Who has the right to determine the fate of such objects, and why?

- How did the involvement of Albert and Alex Lara, who discovered their connection through Ancestry.com, impact the repatriation process? What does this suggest about the role of individual action in civic matters?
- The article highlights the emotional and spiritual significance of the shrine for the Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation. How does the concept of "spiritual healing" relate to the idea of civic justice?
- How does the repatriation of the Mowachaht Whalers' Shrine relate to ongoing debates about cultural appropriation and the rights of Indigenous peoples?
- What lessons can be learned from this case study about the responsibilities of museums and other institutions in preserving and returning cultural heritage?

News Break is posted to the Web on Tuesday. Please share this NIE News Break program with other teachers. To sign-up for the print replica for your class, please [register online](#) or call 206/652-6290 or toll-free 1-888/775-2655.

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